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PRESENT POSITION OF THE HIGH CHURCH PARTY

A FEW WORDS

FROM
A LAYMAN

“Look unto the rock from whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit from whence ye are digged.”—ISAIAH li. 1.

London
RIVINGTONS, WATERLOO PLACE

HIGH STREET
Orford

TRINITY STREET
Cambridge

1874



*PRESENT POSITION OF THE HIGH
CHURCH PARTY*

COOl heads and steadfast hearts are needed now by all who love the Church of England; for now, if ever, she is passing through a great crisis in her history. Like other times of trial through which she has passed, certain, by God's blessing, to give her increased power to carry on effectually the great work He has given her to do. Certain, if received in patience, to purge away the dross which in the late years of rapid progress is sure to have accumulated round her work, and to have clogged and hindered her endeavours to bring the whole of this great people of England into her fold.

But however certain the ultimate blessing may be, a crisis like the present is especially a time for cool heads and steadfast hearts, for any rashness of action on the one hand, or lukewarmness and faint-heartedness on the other, are sure to hinder God's work with any branch of His Church. Even in the same way that similar causes so frequently hinder God's merciful dealings with individual members of His body, when, in His mercy, He is

pleased to plead with them by placing them in the furnace of affliction.

Before I venture to propose a present course of action, it may be well to make a brief summary of the past history of the Anglican movement, the principles upon which it was founded, and the results which have followed a consistent adherence to those principles.

John Keble's *Christian Year*, published in 1827, began the work, by giving, in a beautiful form generally accepted by the whole Church, a living reality to Prayer Book teaching. Sir John Coleridge, in allusion to this publication, writes: "The design of it is very simply stated in the preface. Keble wished to help towards the establishment of 'a sober standard of feeling in matters of practical religion, and this by a work in close harmony with, and constant reference to, our Liturgy;' in the title page his motto is, 'In quietness and confidence shall be your strength.'"

This was followed by the celebrated *Tracts for the Times*, accompanied by a flood of new editions of the standard works or devotional volumes of our old Anglican divines and the Fathers, and of sermons and pamphlets simultaneously published, by the anonymous writers of the *Tracts* in their own names, all following out the same line of teaching. That it may be clearly seen what that line of teaching was intended to be, I quote the following extracts from the advertisement to the *Tracts for*



the Times, dated Oxford, Feast of All Saints, A.D. 1834 :

“ The following *Tracts* were published with the object of contributing something towards the practical revival of doctrines which, although held by the great divines of our Church at present, have become obsolete with the majority of her members, and are withdrawn from public view, even by the more learned and orthodox few who still adhere to them.”

Again : “ Had he been taught as a child that the Sacraments, not preaching, are sources of Divine grace ; that the Apostolic ministry had a virtue in it which went out over the whole Church when sought by the prayer of faith ; that fellowship with it was a gift and privilege as well as a duty, we could not have had so many wanderers from our fold, nor so many cold hearts within it.”

Again : “ The awakened mind knows its wants, but cannot provide for them ; and in its hunger will feed upon ashes, if it cannot procure the pure milk of the Word. Methodism and Popery are, in different ways, the excuse of those whom the Church stints of the gifts of grace ; they are the foster mothers of abandoned children. The neglect of the daily service, the desecration of festivals, the Eucharist scantily administered, insubordination permitted in all ranks of the Church, orders and offices imperfectly developed, the want of societies for particular religious objects, and the like defi-

ciencies, lead the feverish mind desirous of a vent to its feelings, and a stricter rule of life, to the smaller religious communities, to prayer and Bible meetings, and ill-advised institutions and societies on the one hand, and on the other to the solemn and captivating services by which Popery gains its proselytes."

From this it is manifest that the Anglican movement was governed by three distinct principles :

1. A full elucidation of Prayer Book teaching on the authority of the old Anglican divines of the seventeenth century, and of the Fathers of the Primitive Church to whom they appealed.

And here it is worthy of remark that Mr. Disraeli, in his latest utterances upon the Public Worship Regulation Bill, refers to these men as the true High Church party. He says: "The most able vindication of Protestantism, and the most able opponents of the Church of Rome, are to be found among the High Church party; and in the most critical period of the history of the Church of England, when the Bishops were sent to the Tower, the majority of those prelates were men of High Church principles."

2. A dutiful allegiance to our Church as the true *via media* between Puritanism on the one hand, and Popery on the other.

3. A consistent obedience to law and order to such an extent as to expect, and to be prepared, as

Bishop Wilson, to suffer persecution under adverse laws.

It was working upon these principles that that success was obtained which Dr. Pusey so simply describes in his speech in St. James's Hall: "In the early days of the *Tracts*, when I was young, we were very popular. I was frightened at the rapidity, and feared lest the growth should become superficial. We want, I said, a good north-easter, and truly it came."

The first north-easter came as the immediate consequence of the neglect, on the part of some rash men, of the advice of their leaders, and of the consequent transgression of those sound principles upon which the movement was first started.

After this, though the movement was somewhat checked by numerous secessions to Rome (chiefly from among those who in their youth had been educated in no fixed Church principles), it visibly progressed. There were surplice rows, resistances to the plain direction for the use of the Church Militant Prayer, and other distinct questions of ritual which arose from time to time. But so soon as men realised that these things were recognised in the judgments of the courts as a true extension of Prayer Book teaching, they had the common sense to accept them. And even when prosecutions for doctrine were attempted, and though many decisions were adverse, attention was drawn to the doctrine attacked, and one by one the great truths

of the Gospel, as elucidated by Prayer Book teaching, were considered, discussed, and finally accepted and taught in a manner before unknown.

No sooner did our people begin to realise, as the effect of this teaching, the truth of the continual presence of God in His Church in and through His sacraments, than everything became hallowed and a new life was diffused over all. A truer belief in Episcopacy resulted in the building up of our meagre and isolated mission stations in the Colonies into thirty-two fully organised dioceses, and their subsequent development in our different Colonies into daughter Churches, under the government of their own synods.

A fuller realisation of the office of the priesthood gave us in a few years and everywhere a clergy generally fully alive to their great and increasing responsibilities.

A truer appreciation of the duties of the laity as members of the One Body of Christ, and commissioned each in their own sphere to carry on His work on earth, resulted in the formation of guilds and sisterhoods, and in a vast increase of individual self-sacrifice among the laity of both sexes at home and abroad.

A desire for God's honour stirred up our whole people to build and restore churches, and to improve the conduct of our Church services, until no country and no age can compare with the decency and reverence witnessed to through the length and

breadth of our land, from the smallest parish church to the grandest of our cathedrals. And this revival leavened the whole nation; even the Nonconformist benefits from it in finer buildings, more elaborate services, and increasing personal zeal. And all this was brought about and was daily growing, without any prosecutions against laxity or to enforce a greater uniformity, but simply by God's blessing upon a powerful because patient and continuous advocacy of true Prayer Book teaching, witnessed to on the part of the teacher by an endeavour to make the Prayer Book a living thing, and for himself the guide and incentive to a holier daily life.

And even up to the last, when the old lines of the Anglican movement had been sadly forgotten by many, we had gone far towards the realisation of the possible results of such teaching as set forth in the first advertisement of the *Tracts for the Times* (from which I have already quoted) "that it was specially adapted to break up existing parties in the Church, and to form instead a bond of union among all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." For surely the united action of all parties, at our Church synods and conferences, and especially in the conduct of Lenten and other missions for the renewal of spiritual life, has given us a foretaste of such a blessed consummation.

It will be well for us to consider, as calmly and dispassionately as we can, how we have come to

drift away from our old lines of action, and deservedly to bring down upon us another north-easter to check, and, we may hope, to purify and mature, our past work, and to fit us for its better regulated and more careful continuance.

While acting on the old lines in teaching a real Presence, which the Wesleys held with us and all Catholic Christianity, we were careful not to go beyond or against Prayer Book teaching by attempting to define what she had left as undefinable.

In teaching the realities of the world unseen, and giving due honour to the Blessed Virgin and the saints, we acknowledged that all their honour and glory was through the merits of our common Lord, and always brought prominently before all (as the Wesleys also did) His continual and all-sufficient intercession for us before the throne of God.

In teaching the dignity of the priesthood, we had no desire to exalt the man, or to ignore the importance of the laity as an essential part of Christ's Body.

In maintaining the liberty of all to confess, and on true repentance to receive the benefits of absolution, we had no desire to introduce a system of compulsory confession.

But as the work advanced, and as different classes of our people who had been estranged flocked back again to our churches, there was a danger of

drifting away from old landmarks. It became at once a necessity to relax the rigid teaching of the *Tracts for the Times*, "that it was the duty of all to attend all the services of the Prayer Book intact, however long or wearisome they might be to many minds."

As a new spirit arose among our people, we naturally sought after the re-introduction of obsolete practices from a desire to gratify the tastes of our different congregations, but with no desire to go beyond the limits of Prayer Book teaching.

The first work, simply to enforce those Prayer Book rules, which, however long neglected, were patent to all, was comparatively easy, notwithstanding the vehement opposition which it at first encountered.

But the new work, though carried out generally with a faithful endeavour still further to act in accordance with the teaching of the Prayer Book as contained in the ornaments rubric, was one that could not be discreetly carried out by individual clergymen.

It is true that without individual extravagancies there would have been no revival at all: but the old Tractarians had a clearly-written law, however obsolete, to guide them; whereas, in attempting to revive practices permitted under the undefined ornaments rubric, men were driven to make, as it were, a new written law, with no defined limits for their guide, and thus to drift from what individuals

might do into the direct work of the Church in her corporate capacity.

But while we see how many were led astray by attempting impossibilities, we must remember that these attempts at revival of obsolete practices were not made for the mere excitement of the thing, but to meet a real want of different classes of mind, and a greater amount of religious zeal than we have ever had to deal with before. And the Church's duty at the present time is not to cut off the excrescence, but to meet the natural desire which gave it birth, and satisfy the apparent need.

Our past success, and the requirements of our increasing congregations, pressed the limits of the Prayer Book very far, and gave proof that renewed life required greater freedom; but though it is clearly not for individuals to attempt the revival of obsolete practices beyond the written law of the Church, it is the work of the whole Church in her representative assemblies, and one of the chief remedies for our present distress, to give greater freedom in the Church under the guidance of recognised authorities.

There has, however, in these latter days, arisen, in secular and ecclesiastical affairs alike, in all parts of our nation, a republican independent spirit, impatient of all law and restraint, which is fast taking away all respect for those in authority, magnifying the self-importance of individual opinion, and tending to a state of things alien alike to all good

government and all true religion, and certainly the direct opposite of the old spirit of the *Tracts for the Times*, and more especially of that spirit of martyrdom which they taught, and which is the direct counterpart of that self-assertion and impatience of all restraint which is so rampant now.

It is wonderful that this spirit, which is visible in all classes of life, should have received its fullest development among some of the clergy who should naturally have been the first to keep it under control.

But the controlling forces which must be found more or less in the heart of every Christian have been dissipated and well-nigh removed in Churchmen by the direct consequences of the Purchas judgment.

Very ugly rumours had got afloat as to the attempted interference of the Archbishop of the northern province at the delivery of a former judgment of the Court of Appeal, and rightly or wrongly an opinion obtained very generally in the Church that an attempt would be made to secure a judgment less favourable to the High Church party than previous judgments which had been delivered. And certainly the existing arrangement of summoning a special court for each special case, and afterwards the eagerness of some of the bishops to force upon all a strict obedience to the Purchas judgment, gave colour to the truth of these rumours.

At all events, partly from the unfairness of the attempt to make the judgment in an undefended case a true interpreter of all Church law, and partly from a belief in the above-mentioned rumours, the High Church clergy very generally resisted the determination of many of the bishops to force the judgment upon all. Under cover of this very general feeling, extreme men renewed again practices they had previously abandoned.

The old lines of obedience to law were thus unhappily broken through, and the controlling force against extravagance and lawlessness in the Church was well nigh removed.

It is fair to add that the mass of the High Church clergy, and the few extreme men who followed in their wake, disregarded the interpretation put upon the law in this most unsatisfactory case, not believing it to be right or maintainable, and desiring to force on a new trial, which they believe would have shown that the disobedience was really on the part of the maintainers and favourers of that judgment, without ever intending that a course of apparent disobedience to law should have been persisted in so long. The unhappy determination of the bishops to rely on this unsatisfactory judgment as good law, and to discourage the prosecution of any new appeals, had a great deal to do in continuing this state of anarchy and mutual accusations of lawlessness to the present time. A new trial before the new Court of Appeal, without episcopal judges,

would go far to restore a healthier state of things in the Church.

Unfortunately, from the suspension of the Judicature Act of 1873, such a judgment is for the present delayed.

I gather from the past review that we have broken away from the truer lines of the old movement.

1. In a vain endeavour after impossibilities, which was sure to bring failure and misconstruction of motives upon the individuals who attempted them.

2. In a disregard of all authority, from an eager desire to protest against a judgment we considered unfair, and an appeal from which was unwisely too long denied to us.

And we have had a glimpse of the true remedy for both these causes of transgression.

The first, by the Church acknowledging the necessity, and herself undertaking the real remedy, which was too great for individual effort; and, in the second place, by a demand for a rehearing before the new Court of Final Appeal, and a new judgment in a fully defended case, embracing the various points touched by the Purchas judgment. This would define, to the satisfaction of all reasonable men, what is the true reading of the Church's present law, and restore us to that true obedience to episcopal authority, which, according to the old teaching of the *Tracts for the Times*, we, as

members of a true branch of the Catholic and Apostolic Church, are bound to render.

All will allow, in their more sober moments, that the increased energy of the Church, and her duty to meet the demands of the different tastes of her increasing members from all ranks of life amongst us, call for a greater variation of services, some of a more penitential, others of a more jubilant or gorgeous character; and there can be no doubt of the source from which these varying services and practices should be procured. The last revisers of our Prayer Book, in 1662, in their retention of the ornaments rubric (with some alterations in answer to the demand for its rejection), and by other alterations of the Prayer Book in the spirit of the first Prayer Book of Edward VI., did their best to carry back Non-conformists and Churchmen to the time when the whole nation was of one Church, reformed by the English themselves without the leaven of any foreign element. They thereby witnessed to the continuity of the reformed Church with the old Church of the nation, and maintained for the Church a breadth and catholicity of teaching as her lawful heritage from the teaching and practice of the early and undivided Church.

The reasons for this marked appeal to the first reformed Prayer Book of Edward are manifest to all who look to the history of 1662. Suffering from the scarcely healed sores of the late troubles,

it was natural that all anxious for peace should look back to the time before the origin of those troubles had taken root in our land.

In the third year of Edward VI. the persecutions of Protestants on the Continent sent many Calvinists and Anabaptists to our shores. The former fraternised with our reformers and speedily proposed a new Prayer Book. The Marian persecutions exasperated people against the old religion, and this, with a large influx of Continental Protestantism, under Elizabeth, resulted in another revision. It is not too much to say that the prosecutions, under Laud, for a stricter uniformity were directed against this foreign element, and brought on a reaction which culminated in that Puritanism which, when fully developed, proved itself to be so essentially alien to the English character. Notwithstanding the introduction of this foreign Protestant element, it is an historical fact that many old customs essentially Catholic, as distinguished from Roman, were formally acknowledged, and in regular practice among us, though neither specially forbidden or enjoined. In the reign of James the First we know that a clergyman was punished for omitting the manual acts in the consecration of the elements, which, not being in the Prayer Book then in use, rested entirely on this unwritten law. The old red altar cloths, with black or purple for Lent, common in the South and West of England, witnessed to the colours

of the old Sarum Use, which was essentially Anglican.

The decoration of our churches with holly at Christmas, with yew at Easter, and lime and nut boughs at Whitsuntide, the ascription of praise before and of thanksgiving after the Gospel, the bowing at the Doxology, turning to the east in the Creeds, are all examples of this fact, while the very usual metrical psalm at the beginning of the service witnessed to the old processional hymn.

There was an immense amount of claptrap in the discussions on the Public Worship Regulation Bill, in the attempt to treat everything from the Mass-book as *ipso facto* condemned, which, if not wilfully misleading, proved a lamentable ignorance of Church history on the part of those who used it. All our Communion Service, with the exception of the Commandments, was taken from the old Mass-book, and there can be no doubt that the old service books from which our reformers culled, and the old practices which our reformers permitted, are the rightful source from which additional services and hymns, and additional practices tending to edification, should be sought for, as the true heritage of the Old English National Church, apart from all mediæval ultramontane additions. It must not be forgotten that there is a stately ritual to be maintained essentially anti-Roman, as coming from a distinctly separate source, and witnessing to the existence and vitality of that

old National Church, which it was always the policy of Rome to extinguish, and which had been preparing the way for the Reformation by continuous resistance to Roman aggression during a long series of years.

One of the most subtle dangers of the present time is the danger that, in a mad protest against any semblance of Romanism (which the extravagancies I lament have given rise to) true Catholic practices and true Catholic teaching should be swept away. For, after all, this is the only sure platform on which we can take our stand against Roman claims on the one hand and rank infidelity on the other. Our reformers well knew there was a true Church of Christ upon which Roman error was encrusted, and they wisely endeavoured to base their reformation upon the sure foundation of an appeal to primitive antiquity. Individual zeal may fail in an attempt to follow out these true lines of the Reformed Church; but the Church in her representative assemblies can safely follow in the old paths, and give us the liberty we desire without making us more Roman or less Catholic than we were before.

The danger I have just pointed out cannot be too greatly exaggerated; for when we ask for comprehension as the only true and statesmanlike remedy for our present distress, we hear people calmly advocating a compromise—a little more laxity to the Low to match a little more to the

High, and to be balanced by a little more laxity to please the Broad Church. Compromise is an ugly word, even in politics; it is an unreality in religion, and will only give abiding satisfaction to the lukewarm and cold-hearted amongst us, but the real living members of the Church on either side will really have none of it.

But it is mere waste of time to kill that which has been long dead. There is a greater danger in the declaration of some thousand clergy against any concessions to the Ritualist party. This is signed mainly by the leaders of the great Evangelical party, who, with all their zeal and goodness, have been always prominent in their desire to sectarianise the Church of England by confining her within the limits of their own narrow experiences in religion, and by others who, notwithstanding their high-sounding titles, can in their present retirement have no claim to represent our daughter Churches in the Colonies, whatever else they may represent under their newly chosen duties.

This declaration also decides in the negative two very important questions :

1. Whether the things it asks Convocation not to do are not already legally permissible, and therefore the rightful heritage of all Anglicans.

2. Whether, if clearly illegal, they are not essentially and purely Catholic, and our heritage from the first.

Surely, after the important discussions with the old Catholics at the re-union conference at Bonn, our Convocations should be doubly careful lest, in obedience to a popular cry, they rashly remove one vestige of our Catholic inheritance with which God has blessed us for this particular end, that we may be in such a crisis as has already occurred on the Continent, the rallying point for that true unity of Christendom for which we have so long sought and so heartily prayed.

Let us therefore demand with a united voice from Convocation the maintenance of the Book of Common Prayer in its integrity, and the preservation of all the old Catholic heritage of our Church, the Convocation to decide upon the rules under which these unenumerated customs may be safely re-introduced amongst us. It is not on the give and take principle, and certainly not on the take away principle, that Convocation should attempt to act. But, following the lines of our Prayer Book, she should endeavour to expand the limits there laid down, with a view to give greater freedom to all under the safeguards of episcopal discretion and guidance.

But it must not be forgotten that we have to contend for the substance more than the shadow: past extravagances on the part of many have induced threats of unconstitutional State aggression; while others call upon Englishmen to put down, as sacerdotalism, all belief in the Divine institution of

the Church, and in the divinely constituted apostolic orders of our bishops and clergy, which make them the sole authorised dispensers of Divine grace. These great truths were ever held by the seventeenth century divines and the whole High Church party and all Catholic Christendom.

To check such demands, to place ourselves in a stronger position to defeat them, we must be prepared to unite together on all points. Surely in such a crisis it cannot be too much to ask that all that independent action within our body, which has caused such offence and given such fresh power to the enemy, be at once receded from.

If Convocation acts boldly in defence of our present liberties, and a new judgment of the new Court of Final Appeal has re-settled existing laws, we shall have the opportunity of getting back upon the forsaken lines upon which past successes were attained, and as wiser, if sadder men, be enabled to press forward with a united front and with renewed energy upon the work God has given us to do; but if we would do this we must no longer ignore the voice of our old leaders, or act in an independent spirit against those set over us in the Lord. There is no excuse for such impatience of rebuke and contradiction. The Church is not the creature of an hour, and does not depend on our individual work for its success.

The advice of Dr. Pusey, as given at the conclusion of his speech in St. James's Hall, should go

deeply to the hearts of all, and with his words of wisdom I will conclude: "I believe that one great end of this check is to consolidate us; there has been too much of guerilla warfare of late, every one doing what was right in his own eyes. One secret of our strength in the early days of this great movement was our union: what one thought all thought; what one said all said. We taught what we inherited from those before us, deepened by the study of the Fathers, to whom the Church of England sent us. I trust that those who think themselves most advanced in this day will profit by past experience, and, retiring into the main body, will neither expose themselves, nor us, nor the Church—nor what we hold dearer than life, the truth of God—to perils, the extent of which they cannot well estimate; but by union will give strength to the whole. We felt from the first that as the cause was not ours, but God's, so what was done was not our doing, but His. Our saying was, 'This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.' We can but toil and effect nothing; God and His truth, and we and those after us, as His instruments, can do anything, even evangelise and catholicise this great energetic England."

NELSON.







